

## **Item #71: Vegetation Restoration**

**Evaluation Question:** Were projected vegetation restoration projects completed and effective?

**Resources to be measured:** No quantitative measures defined

**Data Sources:** Forest Plan projection of activities compared to accomplishments

This monitoring item was established in 1999 with completion of amendment 21 to the Forest Plan and was designed to look at forest accomplishment of vegetation restoration projects. This item has not been reported previously.

Appendix M of the Forest Plan, amended in 1999, projected reasonably foreseeable restoration vegetation management projects for the period 2001 – 2006, by sub-basin. Projected vegetation management projects included harvest, prescribed fire, and stand tending such as thinning. While many of the foreseeable restoration projects from 1999 have been implemented, changed circumstances due to things like large fires have precluded other projects. A number of the projects identified have NEPA complete, but are not completely implemented.

Monitoring item 34 and 35 compare projected harvest levels with actual harvest. Monitoring item 58 describes prescribed fire levels in comparison to projections.

Over the last decade, trees have been planted on between 1,950 and 3,050 acres annually, totaling 26,336 acres of trees planted on the forest. This represents 1,593 separate planting units. Ninety-five percent of these acres meet the region's objective for restoration planting, featuring species of concern Western larch and Western white pine in addition to other locally adapted species of trees. Planting prescriptions are designed based on specific site conditions to be consistent with fire-adapted vegetation composition, function and structure. These treatments are planned to restore or maintain vegetation health, and provide for resilient forests and future habitats.

Whitebark pine planting has been on-going on a limited basis, with mixed results in seedling survival. Work is underway, cooperating with Glacier Park Canadian counterparts and adjacent National Forests, to collect seed sufficient to support an expanded whitebark pine planting effort. As our knowledge increases about this species, and we gain more experience in burning and planting restoration efforts in these high elevation ecosystems, the Forest will expand these actions to restore this important species.

Vegetation Management projects are monitored annually via an integrated review including Leadership Team members and resource program managers. In review of 4 major projects, activities have been identified as on the whole very consistent with what was planned, and effective in meeting the project purpose and need.

**Evaluation:** Overall, the level of restoration activity has been substantially less than projected in 1999. This is due to a variety of changed conditions such as wildfire, changed priorities to

emphasize fuel reduction in the wildland urban interface, as well as the specific resource considerations identified during project level environmental analysis. In some resource areas, budget has also been a limiting factor.

**Recommended Actions:** This is an important question, but difficult to objectively quantify results. Consider how to best monitor attainment of restoration objectives during Forest Plan revision.